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REOC Spot Report: Region 8, Smurfit Stone Site possible risk of flooding, Frenchtown, MT

US Environmental Protection Agency

Report as of: 1400 MDT May 25, 2018

Overview: The 3,200-acre Smurfit-Stone Mill site is located 11 miles northwest of Missoula, Montana. A pulp mill operated on site from 1957 to 2010. The core industrial footprint of the mill site covers about 100 acres. Over 900 acres of the site consist of a series of unlined ponds used to store treated and untreated wastewater effluent from the mill, as well as primary sludge recovered from untreated wastewater. Some ponds initially used to store wastewater were subsequently drained and used for the landfilling of solid wastes from the mill. The Potential Responsible Parties (PRPs) are currently performing a Superfund Remedial Investigation under the oversight of USEPA's Remedial Program.

The Site is positioned along the Clark Fork River just outside Missoula, MT. The area is currently undergoing historically significant flooding event. USEPA and stakeholders are monitoring the berm that separates the Site from the river for signs of instability.

State, Local and other Federal Agency Actions: Local officials are concerned regarding the risk of flooding and possible release of contamination from the Site to the river. A Region 8 OSC deployed to the site with two START contractors to assist the efforts of the Helena Office. The EPA office in Helena, MT, has two RPMs assigned to the site, and has an Administrative Order on Consent with the PRPs at the Site.

EPA Actions: On May 24, 2018, OSC Martin McComb met with Missoula County officials and representatives for the PRPs at the Site. The OSC developed a strategy to (1) Perform a visual inspection of the berm along the Clark Fork River; (2) Formalize current monitoring efforts and develop a GIS-based Common Operating Picture to distribute this information to stakeholders; (3) Draft an Interim Contingency Plan to support response efforts should a failure of a berm occur; and (4) Recommend components for inclusion in a long-term Monitoring and Contingency Plan.

Media Interest: Media interest and congressional interest are high. A press conference was held at 1100 on May 25, 2018.